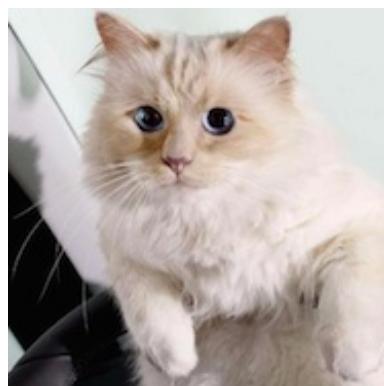


ADVERTISING

Lagerfeld's Choupette leads trend as pets become brand representatives

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Choupette stars in a calendar this year

By KAY SORIN

Millennials are well-known for their love of looking at pictures of cats on the Internet, but some luxury brands are beginning to take advantage of this and use the furry friends to market products.

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The best example of this is Choupette, Karl Lagerfeld's white Birman cat, who became an Internet sensation after the designer adopted her from a friend in 2011, and who is now a muse for the designer's own line. Other brands including menswear retailer Mr Porter, linen brands Frette and Sferra and fashion brand Marchesa have gotten on board recently, including animals in campaigns or posting pictures for National Puppy Day March 23.

"The axiom amongst agencies is that every ad requires sex, children or dogs," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami, FL. " Pets elicit emotion. They open a viewer's heart to the ad's messaging."

"Pets speak in ways that only the heart understands."

Cat's meow

One obvious benefit of using animals in marketing is that they are so cute and loveable.

Humans have loved animals for centuries, and Choupette's impressive 51.4 thousand followers on Instagram is evidence of just how much.



Choupette is known for her expensive taste for luxury goods

Choupette has inspired two accessories lines for Karl Lagerfeld thus far, and she has launched a modeling career, starring in the 2015 Opel Corsa Calendar as well as a holiday campaign for a beauty collection Mr. Lagerfeld created in collaboration with Japanese cosmetics brand Shu Uemura, which was inspired by Choupette ([see story](#)).



Lagerfeld photographs Choupette on shoot for her calendar

Choupette has become a celebrity persona in her own right, inspiring other brands to look into furry ambassadors of their own that can capture consumers' attention. For example, U.S.-based fashion label Marchesa recently introduced Lottie Chapman, a Yorkshire terrier who will represent the brand's new "ready-to-wag" collection of animal accessories.

Lottie has her own Twitter account, an essential element for any pet attempting to become a successful brand representative. Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has a Facebook page for Smudge, the 7-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever that the brand refers to as its canine hospitality ambassador.



Smudge loves to pose for photos with guests

Brands such as Italian linen maker Frette and German automaker Mercedes-Benz, among others, celebrated National Puppy Day on March 23 by posting images to their Facebook and Instagram accounts. Both brands encouraged consumers to send in pictures of their own pets, which the brands would then repost.

Online menswear retailer Mr Porter recently shared a blog post encouraging readers to take style tips from some of Instagram's most famous dogs. With a short bio of each animal, the quirky post likely attracted animal-lovers and Mr Porter consumers alike.



Mr Porter shared many photos of stylish dogs on its blog

With the low-cost and high-reward of creating an animal ambassador, more brands should be adopting similar campaigns in the future. Pets are a great way to connect with a younger audience more eager to browse cat pictures online than watch a television commercial.

For the brands that are able to combine the two experiences into one, the possibilities are endless.



This adorable French Bulldog was one of Frette's favorite submissions

Nine lives

In addition to being good marketing tools, animals can make for excellent muses. For example, Karl Lagerfeld created his Choupette accessory collection, which he then sparked interest in through a social video featuring the feline.

In her film, the cartoon Choupette changes from a sweet cat to a monstrous one. This whimsical film creates a fun campaign that parallels the nature of the collection that features monster Choupette on the items ([see story](#)).

Even if the animals used have not achieved celebrity status like Choupette, they can still make advertising more appealing to consumers. For instance, French leather goods maker Hermès recently released a video that shines a light on its lighting options with help from a troop of playful house cats.

The Internet is brimming with videos and imagery showing the humorous antics of cats and in turn, many consumers are enamored by these mischievous pets so much so that a click-through is a must. Although the cats featured in Hermes' "Luminaires" video are sophisticated and well behaved, aligning with an Internet trend may result in interest from consumers unfamiliar with the brand's offerings ([see story](#)).

As Choupette's story shows, a little effort can take a pet very far when it comes to marketing. Nevertheless, it is important to consider all aspects.

"Pets play a supporting role; the product remains the hero," Mr. Ramey said. "Ultimately you

still have to sell product.

"Marketers must be cognizant of the tipping point."

Final Take

Kay Sorin, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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